

Mark's 'Life and Ministry of Jesus Christ'

Jesus taught the sinfulness of man (Mark7:1-23)

According to Jesus, your inner self is the cause of your sinfulness. Your spirit, your soul, your likes, your loves, your courage, your core and your heart within are sinful. You do wrong things because your heart is at variance with God. You think wrong thoughts because your mind is wrong. You hold wrong attitudes because your heart is wrong. The *symptoms* of spiritual death are given in verses 21-23, but the *source* is within every man's heart.

The commands of God are ignored by man

Verses 8, 9 and 13 speak of 'letting go of', 'setting aside' and 'nullifying' the commands of God. This can be done by intent, but is more frequently done by neglect, quite unintentionally. Paying lip service to these commands before men may make you appear right in their eyes, but God sees the reality - you are a hypocrite! You and I can test ourselves on just this one commandment from Mark 12:30, 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' It is so easy to let go of God's commands.

The demands of men are instilled into men

Verse 13 shows us the danger of 'your tradition that you have handed down'. We believe what we have heard from someone else. We base our opinions on a second-hand God someone told us about. Remember, God holds each individual responsible for what he or she believes.

Verse 8 speaks of 'holding on to the traditions of men'. It is strange how willingly we let go of God's commands, yet how unwillingly we let go of the traditions of men! Children are often told not to pick up sweets from the floor or the street pavement. The trouble is that children like sweets. It will take a lot to make a child leave one behind.

All that glitters is not gold. Do not be content with the fools' gold of tradition when there is priceless treasure in the word of God. Let us suppose you were designing a wheel. Having put it all together you find that it does not run properly. Seeing a short spoke you take it out hoping to correct the problem, but it still does not run smoothly. Then you see a

long spoke so you take it out to adjust it, but that makes no difference either. Before long you could be adjusting all the spokes - but in fact you have missed the real problem. The hub is not in the centre of the wheel. As long as that remains off centre, the wheel will never run true.

If you do not have God's commands at the hub of your life, you can play around with the spokes of good works, theories of God, humanist beliefs, but it will make absolutely no difference. God must be central. Man's problem is that he likes to be central himself.

The remand of mankind by inherent sin

There can be no doubting that we are all slaves to sin. We do the bad sooner than we do the good. Sin has deprived the human race of real liberty. We do what sin wants us to do. The source of sin is our hearts (7:15, 19, 21). The signs of sin are obvious (7:21-23).

Before you get discouraged, remember Mark 1:15. The good news is that Jesus Christ came to release us. *Repentance* is a change of heart that leads us to the *release* of new life. David was a murderer, an adulterer, a deceiver and a liar, but when he confessed his sin, God cleansed him (Psalm 51). There is hope for you and me.